

# Plain View



## Giving Examples of Tried and True

### About Joe Caughlin

**This month we chose Joe Caughlin as our Grower of the Month. He and his family focus on certified seed wheat production and cow-calf pairs. His diverse farming illustrates innovativeness while remaining true to the traditional aspects of the family farm.**

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**J**oe Caughlin farms near Tonkawa, Okla. It's a diverse operation and a

true family effort. He farms with his brother, Paul, and his parents, Jack and Sally. Joe earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Oklahoma State University. While attending OSU, he met his wife, Robyn. They have four children, Katie, 10, Kevin, 7, and twins, Audrey and Nicole, soon to be 3.

Emphases of the Caughlin operation are certified seed wheat production and cow-calf pairs, with about 175 mother cows. They use the wheat crop for fall and winter grazing where they can. They farm grain sorghum, soybeans, and corn as summer rotation crops. They round out the operation with alfalfa, Sudan grass, and other crops for hay.

It is important to be involved in the community. The family attends St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Tonkawa, and Joe is involved on the Parish Council. He's also been a member of the board of directors for the regional Farmers Cooperative Association for the maximum term limit of nine years.

"My grandfather was one who helped get the co-op started here, and I always respected him for the efforts he put into that," he said. Joe also serves on the Kay County Conservation District board.

Not only does the district work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to implement farm conservation practices, it also works with youth education, increasing awareness of agriculture and conservation.

Currently, he serves on the board of directors for the Oklahoma Wheat Grower's Association, and in that capacity he also serves on the Oklahoma Wheat Research Foundation.

"We work closely with Dr. Carver and the Wheat Improvement Team at OSU. We are fortunate to have some of the high quality researchers in the field here at OSU. We are real happy with the progress," Joe said. They have had long-time involvement with OSU Cooperative Extension, and Joe has served on the Kay County Extension Advisory Council.

In its cattle operation, the family mainly uses wheat pasture for its own calves rather than purchasing a lot of stocker cattle. They mostly graze the sandy ground near their home place. The sandy ground dries out quicker, and it is convenient to have cattle near home.

"We had late wheat this year, and less pasture available to us,"

he said. Joe noted that, "Every year is different, but we feel that in some years grazing can be a benefit to the crop by helping to relieve some of the disease and insect pressures out there."

The Caughlins have been in the seed wheat business for about three years and are currently producing about a thousand acres of certified seed. To support this aspect of their operation, they added additional on-farm grain storage and most recently installed a 12 ft. by 70 ft. truck scale right on the farm for convenience in loading seed wheat for customers.


Quality is important to their seed wheat operation, doing all they can throughout the season to maintain quality and build a base of satisfied customers. As an AgriPro associate, the operation has been producing Jagalene wheat the last couple of years. This year is the first the family has not produced Jagger wheat.

Crop rotation helps keep the ground in good condition for seed wheat production. A few years back, they had some wheat blow out and took the opportunity to plant milo for the first time. Next they added soybeans and most recently corn as an alternative to milo. Corn has been advantageous in terms of being able to follow it with wheat in the same fall if conditions allow.

Adding other crops into the mix gives you the opportunity to improve soil quality and reduce disease and insect pressure. Joe also noted crop rotation gives you the opportunity to learn what various crops use in terms of nutrients and moisture. He pointed out as you learn what different crops require, you can better anticipate what your ground will need in years to come.

The main challenge they have run into is many of their soils are in flat, poorly-drained areas where they are not able to get into the field to plant or harvest.

The Caughlins' diverse farm operation demonstrates you can create new opportunities while remaining true to the traditional aspects of your family operation. By remaining open to new ideas, experimenting with new technology, and being active in the community and industry, the Caughlins will continue to see success into the future. More information about the Caughlins and their operation is available at our Web site.



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*We are Areawide Pest Management for Wheat, a five-year project developed by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, to demonstrate pest management practices for the Russian wheat aphid and greenbug. Our main goal is to collaborate with wheat producers in evaluating and demonstrating non-chemical pest management techniques, with particular emphasis on the management of the Russian wheat aphid and the greenbug. The elements of our program include:*

- *Crop Diversification*
- *Variety Selection*
- *Field Monitoring and biocontrol*
- *Best Management practices for Wheat*

## **Quality is the key...**

**For the Caughlins, the focus is on maintaining high quality, healthy cows and calves. Consumer demand for beef is good. "Right now the cattle market is strong, and our crop markets are not as strong as we would like them to be. There is some risk management there by being diverse." Joe noted you have to be aware that markets will correct as others try to take advantage of the up-market. Eventually it will reach a saturation point. It is important to stay focused on what you have, maintain your financial base. For more information about Joe and his views on seed production, crop rotation and tillage, please see our Web site.**



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**Areawide Pest Management for Wheat**  
Management of Russian wheat aphids and greenbugs



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